



# **Bectu Live Events Network festivals survey 2024**

[bectu.org.uk](https://bectu.org.uk)



Bectu, a sector of Prospect union, surveyed over 100 UK behind-the-scenes festival workers and crew about their experiences during the 2024 festival season. Respondents work in a variety of roles including construction, sound, lighting, production, rigging, stage management and more. In this document you can find some of their testimonials about working conditions at UK festivals.

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## Working conditions and pay

- *The standard working conditions at most festivals are brutal! Extremely long hours, no breaks, loud music, stressful work, sleep deficit and no accommodation.*
- *There was one festival where I couldn't have a break and had to use the general toilets. I was also laughed at by my supervisor when I requested access to a shower.*
- *It was 42 degrees while rigging and my colleague and I collapsed due to heat stroke.*
- *I was offered less than minimum wage as a day rate for a role managing a campsite of 25,000.*

## Hygiene/facilities

- *I worked at a week-long festival where the toilets weren't emptied once. There was waste above some of the toilet seats by the end of it.*
- *The crew camp area had no access to water. There wasn't a tap or a sink and the toilet was far away.*
- *The toilet waste storage burst and flooded our backstage work area. It wasn't cleaned up and we just had to wait for it to dry.*
- *My crew and I were given an overcrowded tour bus as accommodation with more people than bunks, some people had to sleep on the floor.*

## Working hours

- *During the penultimate day of the festival, the crew worked around 20 hours on the promise of having the final day off. In the last hour of the shift (around 5-6am), we were told we actually did have to come in and the start time was just three hours away. Similar stories are commonplace in the industry. They are almost normalised.*
- *There weren't any scheduled breaks at the festivals I worked at. Breaks are rarely part of the event production schedule.*
- *You have people that are responsible for the health and safety of what is effectively a huge and packed city and they are on a knife's edge of sleep.*
- *I worked 155 hours over 2 weeks to ensure a 10-day arts festival went ahead with lack of staff, an unsafe environment from bullying and no support.*

## Mental health

- *There wasn't enough staff and people were being bullied. When I raised a concern about staff wellbeing, I was given a written warning.*
- *I've witnessed crew and technicians being verbally abused by members of the band or their managers. Festivals are intense gigs with very tight changeovers and the bands and workers are under extreme pressure. This leads to a lot of tension between the parties and there is usually no one to manage it.*

## Injuries and health and safety

- *Under the guidance of an impatient and angry manager, we had to use a ratchet strap to attach a cherry picker that was stuck to a forklift. It snapped under the enormous pressure and the buckle of it hit my colleague in the stomach like a bullet. He had an enormous bruise and was on very strong pain killers for days.*
- *A steel shield was picked up by the wind and slammed down on top of the rigger's accommodation. Several people were injured. There was also thousands of pounds worth of damage but no one received compensation.*

- *I worked as power engineer at a festival where there was not enough crew and the ones we had were inexperienced and didn't have tools.*
- *The first day of a de-rig is always a horror story. Health and safety go out the window due to the rush of stripping the site to meet deadlines or transport materials to another show.*
- *I was told to work despite my protests about safety.*
- *The amount of dust in the air at festivals needs to be addressed. It's dangerous for us to breathe in the amount of dust particles that we do.*